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Salisbury Fire Department Personnel and City Delegation Attend Services for Fallen Firefighter Victor A. Isler in New York

Salisbury, NC_March 17, 2008 – Chief Bob Parnell, speaking on behalf of the City of Salisbury and the Salisbury Fire Department (SFD) states that a host of Salisbury Firefighters and representatives from the City of Salisbury, attended the visitation services for fallen Salisbury firefighter Victor A. Isler on Sunday, March 16 at Jordan Park Funeral Home in Island Park, NY. The group was also in attendance at the graveside service for Firefighter Isler at St. Charles Cemetery, E. Farmingdale, NY, earlier today.

A “Firematic Service” held during evening visitation, allowed fire personnel the opportunity to pay their last respects to their fallen brother. The ceremony offered a heartfelt eulogy to the family by Chief Bob Parnell and words of comfort by Deacon Jim Flaherty as honor guard stood silent vigil. Parnell offered to the family that, “Victor was passionate about the fire service and wanted to be a full-time firefighter and Victor made an impact on the Salisbury Fire Department.” Continuing, Parnell shared that Victor shared his love of the fire service with young firefighters.

Chief Parnell reiterated, “Victor taught aspiring firefighters how to respect and honor the job and how they could best serve their community. Victor taught brotherhood and was always respectful.” In reflection and echoing the familiar and respectfully spoken words of firefighter Isler, Chief Parnell stated, “Yes Chief, No, Chief” with a smile and continuing...”I can tell you that Victor Isler had a great impact n his fellow firefighters in Salisbury by teaching them the word ‘brother’.”

Parnell shared that Victor’s dedication to the fire service was ongoing and “he taught us many things that he had learned at FDNY. He so loved Rescue 1, finishing Top Gun right out of Rookie School. His service to his country was insurmountable.”

With sincere integrity and compassion, Parnell addressed the family with this final vow, “The Salisbury Fire Department will stand by you, love you and protect you, as long as we can find you...We love you.” Upon conclusion of these words, over 325 fire personnel, two at a time, approached Isler’s casket during a procession, to pay final respects to one of Salisbury’s bravest. A member of the Salisbury Fire Department and a prior volunteer with Deer Park Volunteer Fire Department in New York, these companies led the Firematic Service procession. In addition, personnel from Ocean Side, Lynnbrook, Brooklyn and New York City fire departments; EMS, Rescue, Suicide and Flood Light units; and Jr. Firefighters participated in the processional.

Upon completion of the paying of last respects, Deacon Flaherty led the congregation in the Lord's Prayer and in final words to the family, the Deacon shared, Jesus teaches that "greater love no man has, that one who lays down his life for another" as taken from the Holy Bible, John 15:13-16. "Tracy, Ryan-Ann and Vic Jr., you have given the ultimate sacrifice and God will never forget this day." Following a final prayer, the Firematic service was dismissed.

To honor and pay tribute to New York City firefighters who lost their lives during the World Trade Center Crisis on Sept, 11, 2001, members of the Salisbury Fire Department traveled to Manhattan following the evening services for firefighter Isler. Paying their respects at the World Trade Center site, Salisbury firefighters also visited Station 10 and Rescue One Station. The late night pilgrimage to Ground Zero to pay their respects was an essential trip for many of Salisbury fire fighters and City representatives. Struggling to deal with the loss of two of Salisbury's finest firefighters, the entourage found the site deeply emotional while connecting to their fallen New York City brothers who perished during 9-11. Firefighter staff at both Station 10 and Rescue One offered their condolences to SFD for their two fallen Carolina brothers.

The graveside service for firefighter Isler, scheduled for 11 a.m. today offered a procession from Deer Park Volunteer Fire Department to St. Charles Cemetery. Engine 343, a '51 Mack Fire Engine, provided the caisson for firefighter Isler. Chief Bob Parnell walked alone in front of the caisson as a bag piper played and firefighters flanked the fire engine procession on foot. In addition, firefighters rode atop the Engine 343 and stood on the rear of the truck. Firefighter Isler's children accompanied their fallen father aboard the caisson. A gift from the state of North Carolina, during the 9-11 crisis, the engine bears the number "343", symbolic of the number of New York's fallen firefighters during the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center tragedy. Over 165 firefighters from North Carolina and New York stood at attention as the caisson approached and entered St. Charles Cemetery, passing under large American flags, suspended high in the sky from fire truck ladders. The graveside service offered a bag piper rendition of Amazing Grace, with the presentation, of the American Flag that had accompanied firefighter Isler aboard the caisson, to his wife and children.

Following a 2 pm luncheon hosted by the Deer Park Fire Department, the Salisbury Firefighters departed for home. Estimated arrival time into Salisbury is expected at 1 to 2 a.m., early Tuesday morning, March 18. With heartfelt words, Captain Wayne Harkey shares this reflection regarding fallen Salisbury firefighter Victor A. Isler, "I never met anybody who wanted to do so much, ...for so many people."

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